

# DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH



COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### COUNTY CONDUCTS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA EXERCISE

**San Bernardino.** An exercise is being conducted today to evaluate San Bernardino County's readiness to respond to a potential Pandemic Influenza emergency. The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health is coordinating the exercise in partnership with the following agencies:

- County Office of Emergency Services
- Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency
- County Department of Behavioral Health
- California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB)
- 14 Hospitals in the County
- American Red Cross

Margaret Beed, M.D., Public Health Officer, said "It's been a valuable experience to collaborate with our partners so we can build relationships, learn from each other, and maximize resources while strengthening our ability to respond to a public health emergency."

A main purpose of the exercise is to open and continue a Point of Dispensing (POD) and Alternate Care Site (ACS), to distribute medication in response to an outbreak event. The goal is to provide

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appropriate resources to operate within a 12-hour period, and simulate dispensing medication to 1,000 people each hour. The Student Health and Counseling Center at CSUSB is the site of the ACS, and an open area on the campus was chosen to assemble POD services.

There are over 250 people directly involved in this effort, as well as the staff of 14 hospitals in the county. This is the first time the Department of Public Health has coordinated a functional exercise to evaluate emergency preparedness.

Public Health's Animal Care and Control Program is participating in the exercise to demonstrate the effectiveness of their portable evacuation trailer and animal admission procedure. Their role is to care for pets and livestock if the owners had to evacuate their homes and go to a shelter. Human shelters do not take animals. The web-based admission procedure enables animals that are placed in their care to be viewed on the program's website so owners can identify them if lost. The program also has the resources to help allied agencies with equipment and staff.

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A flu pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity, and for which there is no vaccine. The disease spreads easily person-to-person, causes serious illness, and can sweep around the world in very short time.

It is difficult to predict when the next influenza pandemic will occur or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever a pandemic starts, everyone around the world is at risk. Countries might, through measures such as border closures and travel restrictions, delay arrival of the virus, but cannot stop it. The effects of a pandemic can be reduced if preparations are made ahead of time.

Beed recommends that the public stock a two-week supply of food and water, teach children to wash hands frequently with soap and water to limit the spread of germs and prevent infection, and create a family emergency plan.

For more information on Pandemic Influenza, visit the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov) . The San Bernardino County Department of Public Health website provides local information at [www.sbcounty/dph/prepandresponse.gov](http://www.sbcounty/dph/prepandresponse.gov) .

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